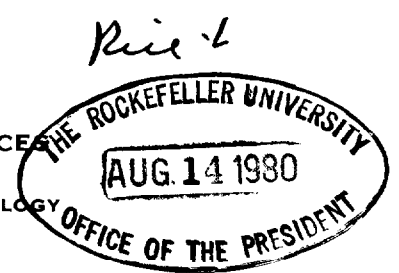


DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES
PUBLIC HEALTH SERVICE
OFFICE OF HEALTH RESEARCH, STATISTICS, AND TECHNOLOGY
HYATTSVILLE, MARYLAND 20782



August 11, 1980

NATIONAL CENTER FOR
HEALTH STATISTICS

Dr. Joshua Lederberg
President, The Rockefeller University
1230 York Avenue
New York, New York 10021

Dear Josh,

Thank you very much for sending me the reprint of your 1966 article, "Census Data for Studies of Genetic Demography." You made an excellent case for linking of records and the need for a unique identifier. I was also interested in the news clipping on a proposed national ID card. I think we are a long way from such action.

I promised to send you some information about our activities relating to coding occupation and industry on the death certificate, a copy of which is enclosed.

As a result of the growing interest in occupational and environmental health statistics, NCHS in cooperation with the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) and the Census Bureau, completed a study last year on the feasibility of coding occupation and industry from the death certificate using the Census Bureau's classification and coding procedures, described in the enclosed paper. The results were sufficiently encouraging to initiate a program, on a pilot basis, of coding occupation and industry using uniform procedures that are consistent with the standard classifications that have been developed by the Bureau of the Census for the 1980 Census of Population. Currently, about a dozen States have experience with coding occupation on the death certificate, and half of these States also have experience coding industry as well.

It is our plan to work with a number of these States as well as with NIOSH and the Census Bureau during the next calendar year to develop a manual that could be used by selected States to code these items in a uniform manner. The Census Bureau and NCHS would also provide coding training to the selected States late in 1981. It would be our hope to support the actual coding of these items with federal funds, beginning with the 1982 data year. We have made a request for additional personnel and budget in F.Y. 1982 to support this program within the Center and among the States.

A question was raised about the quality of medical certifications on death certificates. The National Center for Health Statistics has initiated a comprehensive study to evaluate the quality of medical certification of cause-of-death as reported on death certificates in the United States.

The initial phase of this program is a study to develop, under contract, a comprehensive and systematic approach to the evaluation of medical certification. Within this general framework the study will review an annotated bibliography, prepared for NCHS, on cause-of-death certification and critique the alternative approaches that have been used for evaluating medical certification information. The present study will also specify the methodological alternatives for evaluating cause-of-death information on a national basis and develop guidelines for implementing an actual program for the evaluation of medical certification.

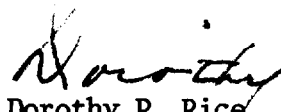
In addition, the present study will develop training guides and make recommendations to the States for maintaining high quality levels in the medical certification portion of death certificates. It is anticipated that this study will be completed by December 1980. The final report will include recommendations for a systematic approach to evaluating the quality of medical certification and the specification of guidelines for the implementation of a national study. The latter will include observations on the quality of multiple cause-of-death statistics and will include suggestions to States to aid in maintaining high levels of quality in the medical certification portion of death certificates.

To undertake this study, the National Center for Health Statistics is working under contract with three eminent statisticians, Dr. Iwao Moriyama, Mr. Joseph Steinberg, and Mrs. Lillian Guralnick.

I hope the above is helpful.

With warm regards,

Sincerely yours,


Dorothy P. Rice
Director

2 Enclosures

cc:
Dr. Kenneth Arrow
Dr. Barbara Mandula